

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Where can I get free or inexpensive legal advice?

In certain cases, you may qualify for free or inexpensive legal advice and representation. If you believe you may be eligible for such services, you should contact one of the following agencies:

Iowa Legal Aid
1111 9th Street, Suite 230
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-243-2151
www.iowalegalaid.org

Iowa State Bar Association
Volunteers Lawyers Project
521 E. Locust, Suite 302
Des Moines, IA 50309
515-244-8617
1-800-325-2909
ISBAVLP@dwx.com

In addition, in some criminal matters you may be entitled to Court appointed counsel. You should contact the Clerk of Court in the County in which your charge arises in order to determine if you are eligible for Court appointed counsel.

2. Can I represent myself?

In certain circumstances, you may represent yourself. This is called proceeding pro se. In certain dissolution and legal separation actions, the Iowa Supreme Court has adopted specialized forms that may be used by pro se parties seeking a dissolution of marriage where there are no minor children involved. These forms can be obtained through the Iowa Supreme Court's web site at <http://www.judicial.state.ia.us/>.

3. How do I select an attorney that is right for me?

The selection of legal representation is a very important decision that should not be swayed based on advertising, promises or other inducements. We encourage you to check an attorney's reputation and select a law firm that not only has experience, but also specializes in the area of law that you are inquiring about. Most importantly, you should ensure that the firm you choose is deserving of your trust and that you are comfortable with the representation.

4. What are your fees?

Fees are determined based on the type of case and the attorney involved. Some cases such as personal injury matters are handled on a contingent fee basis; other cases are handled on an hourly basis. For a more detailed discussion of what fees may be involved in a certain matter, please feel free to contact one of the attorneys in the firm.

5. Is there a charge for the initial appointment?

Whether or not there is a charge for the initial appointment depends on several factors. In a personal injury case that is handled on a contingent fee basis, there is no recovery for our firm unless we are successful in recovering a judgment or settlement in your favor. For other matters that are billed on an hourly basis, there may be a charge for your initial consultation. You should discuss your questions regarding billing with your attorney either prior to, or at, the initial consultation.

6. What can I expect at my first appointment?

When you meet with an attorney in our firm for the first time, we will obtain general information from you regarding your specific situation. We will discuss what has happened thus far, your options, and provide you with advice and counsel so that you can make an informed decision on how best to proceed. We will also attempt to answer any questions you may have and begin the investigation of any potential claims you may have.

7. To what areas of the State of Iowa does your practice extend?

We represent clients in various matters in numerous counties in the State of Iowa, including Marion, Mahaska, Jasper, Monroe, Lucas, Keokuk and Polk County.

8. What are your hours of operation?

The office is typically open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

9. Why do I need an attorney in a personal injury case?

An attorney's job in a personal injury case is to help "level the playing field" by using the attorney's professional experience to help the client obtain fair financial compensation for his or her injuries and damages. If there is a claim for personal injuries, it is likely that there is an insurance company involved as a potential defendant. The insurance company will be represented by legal counsel. The insurance company's goal is to pay out as little as possible to you in order to retain money for the company.

10. What are my rights if I am injured in an accident?

If you are injured and miss time from work, you may be eligible to collect money for the time you miss from work even if your employer paid you while you were off work. In addition, there are many expenses you may be entitled to be compensated for if you suffer an injury, which go beyond just your medical bills and your time off work. You may also be reimbursed for the pain and suffering you were forced to go through because of your injuries. You are also entitled to compensation for any past or future loss of full use of your body or mind as a result of your injury.

11. What are my rights in a dissolution of marriage?

You have several rights in a dissolution of marriage action. You have the right to an equitable division of joint assets and debts. You have a right to have the Court establish a custodial relationship with any minor children and establish visitation that the Court determines to be in the best interests of the children. You may have the right to receive child support or alimony/spousal support. You also have a right to division of assets such as retirement accounts and 401K plans. Each dissolution of marriage action is unique and requires special attention by competent legal counsel in order to determine what cause of action or recovery may be made on your behalf.

12. Why do I need a Will?

Without a Will, your property would be distributed according to State law which may conflict with your actual wishes. If no Will exists to designate how your property should be distributed upon your death, and if you do not leave any heirs, your property will be given to the State. If you do not have a surviving spouse, a Court will decide who will be the guardian of your children. If you do not have a Will, you lose the opportunity to select a personal representative for your estate. This individual is responsible to locate the heirs, pay the debts of the estate, find and list property and distribute the property in your estate. Conflict may arise between family members after your death. Each person in your family may have a different idea about certain decisions you would have made and may argue with each other or contest such issues in Court. Creating a Will provides a blueprint or guideline for those who are left behind to follow in distribution of your assets and custody of your children.